

PLP Proposal: Brand Designer

Overview

In my research, I've determined that there are primarily three types of environment that designers can work in: agency/studio, in house, or freelance. As a junior designer in an agency/studio and in-house environments, you are writing primarily for an "internal" audience or folks employed by your same organization. However, while working as an in-house designer, you will be writing to other members of your organization, but they are often representatives from different departments; thus, to some degree, these people are members of an external audience because they do not work in the field of design. This will still be easier to address than a truly external audience because you have organization's values and culture in common. In contrast, when working as a freelance designer, you are corresponding more directly with a client, or sometimes an agency representing a client. In the freelance designer role, there is a greater need for effective external correspondence to address public audiences (non-specialists).

There is also a general process for design projects that can be applied to all of these environments. The expectations for my level of involvement in each step depends on which environment I'm in and how flexible the duties of my role will be for that organization. To contextualize the samples of workplace writing I will practice composing, I will categorize the artifacts first by environment, then by stage of design process, next by genre, and lastly, for correspondences, by audience. I will focus primarily on correspondences/emails, but there are a few documents sprinkled throughout such as design briefs, proposals, and agreement letters. For the sake of my PLP, I will only create one artifact representative of the in-house environment, mainly because it is not as desirable to me as the other environments. However, I think it is still relevant for me to discuss a bit about what I've learned thus far about in-house designer roles and offer an example of how I'd interpret the constraints that would inform writing for that kind of workplace.

Agency

A designer working for an agency, or “studio” if it is a small business, has the luxury of working with other specialists with overlapping technical skills. When writing in this kind of workplace, individuals can generally use more field-specific terms and language that only those from a similar background may understand. The most basic and common team structure applied in this kind of environment is one in which designers report to a creative director or “strategist” (with duties such as guiding the team, interpreting and translating the design brief, and overseeing and influencing the quality of work), who in turn reports to a project manager (who is the administrator and primary liaison between the team and the client). Common role titles in the lowest tier are designer, developer, photographer, and copywriter.

The articles I’ll be composing to represent workplace writing as a designer for an agency or studio will address a brand design project for this fictitious client: a writing assistant application called Client A.

Phases:

1. Onboarding

2. Strategy

Memo

- *Meeting notes from brainstorm session*- the purpose of this will be to clarify key points for the project like: deliverables, timeline, client’s value proposition, target audience/end-user, outcomes client is hoping for, media channels to be utilized, etc

3. Design/Development

Correspondence

- To Supervisor- the purpose of this will be to update on project’s progress, ask for feedback, and pitch ideas or share the motivation behind decisions arrived at through peer collaboration
- To Peer- the purpose of this will be to collaborate; share ideas, delegate tasks, reconcile assets developed independently to ensure they combine cohesive unit when combined.

4. Revisions

Correspondence

- To Supervisor- I will reach out to supervisor to describe how I will address the client’s revision requests; ask for feedback on my edits
- To Peer- facilitate sharing among peers about revisions and clarify how changes to one asset may impact approach in revising another asset; ask for advice from a peer with a relevant specialty; pass my work along to next person for each task’s development (for example, passing logos, animations, or illustrations along to the web developer)

5. Launch

Report- team reflects on strengths and weaknesses of project process

In-House

Working as a designer “in-house” means being a member of an organization that has created an internal department for creative and design functions so as not to outsource such tasks to a freelancer or another agency. These companies are usually relatively large and profitable to be able to create permanent design roles. However, a smaller organization may still elect to prioritize their brand design and develop an in-house team. Within these smaller environments, it is typical for the scope of an in-house designer’s responsibilities to fluctuate depending on the company’s current needs, and this sometimes means taking on non-design tasks. In other words, these smaller organizations include more “cross-functional” roles.

One characteristic that sets an in-house design role apart from a design role in the other environments is that you will often have to communicate internally with departments with contrasting areas of specialty: in other words, many of your peers could have little to no design knowledge. You may be collaborating with or reporting to engineers, business analysts, and product managers rather than creative directors. This means talking about your design work to individuals who are not designers. You will often have to persuade them by showing the motivation behind your decisions and backing it up with research/evidence of why it will work. You must give them an explanation of your process in the simplest terms, use inclusive language for varying levels of expertise, and be brief, so as not to overwhelm them.

Sometimes there will already be clear style guidelines already established that you adhere to. Other times, you may be responsible for developing brand new guidelines or improving upon the current branding. Because design isn’t necessarily the focus of the business, it is helpful to develop a spiel for why design is important (Charli Marie). Common things you are tasked with creating as an in-house designer are campaigns, branding, advertising, posters, and internal newsletters.

Phase 2, Strategy:

Proposal- Rather than exemplify the entirety of the design process in this environment, I will produce a proposal for design changes to the company’s existing brand. The fictitious company will be new build, full-service hotel.

Freelance

While many designers dream of being freelancers, it is an undertaking that requires a lot of organization and, usually, experience in order to succeed. This workplace environment stands out in terms of workplace writing from the alternative environments because it calls for the most direct communication with a range of different clients. While you would address the various needs of a range of different clients in an agency setting, you are often not directly communicating with the client, rather your project manager would be the one relaying each party's messages. As a freelancer, you take on the administrative task client management while also producing the technical work. This can be a challenge, but it is recommended that you be as responsive and take initiative when corresponding with the client. This ensures that you keep the project moving through the stages of the process, but it also gives the client peace of mind to receive updates along the way. It also boosts your credibility if you are able to mitigate any potential stress the client could feel about directing outcomes by gently but efficiently leading them through the process. Clients can sometimes get stressed about directing outcomes of the project, but you can mitigate this via assertive communication that reassures them of your professionalism.

The articles I'll be composing to represent workplace writing as a designer for an agency or studio will address a brand design project for this fictitious client: a fast-casual pizza restaurant.

Before project: client acquisition genres

- Advertisements- this will be a summary of the services I can provide; description the kind of client I would be able to assist most effectively

Phases:

1. Onboarding

Correspondence

- To Client- request for meeting, overview of what we will discuss (list of questions); it is also recommended to be upfront about how much you charge for the scope of work they are requesting

Design Brief- concise summary of goals, scope, and strategy of the client's design problem

2. Strategy

Correspondence

- To Client: this message will frame what the proposal means; request decision (approval or denial); highlight that next steps are contingent upon approval; briefly outline the process and transition into the next stage in which production begins

Proposal- deliverables, by when, and for how much; the project's plan/schedule, etc

Contract- includes billing schedule- incorporated into the proposal- this I will touch on but not compose because it is recommended to modify an existing contract available via AIGA

<https://www.aiga.org/sites/default/files/2021-04/standard-form-of-agreement-for-design-services.pdf>

3. Design/Development

Correspondence

- To Client: general update about progress made and how any challenges are being resolved

4. Revisions

Correspondence

- To Client: guide them through the revision phase- package several options for each asset and ask for feedback- if their feedback is unclear, ask for clarification- compile all revision requests and repeat them to the client before beginning into revision work (do this twice)

Billing Materials- letter of outstanding balance- project will not progress into revision cycles w/o payment

5. Launch

Correspondence

- To Client: provide the client with the deliverables and direct them how to deploy the assets; request final payment; tie up any loose ends and express salutations

Style Guide- a document describing brand assets and how to apply them, a guidebook for the brand design that another designer could reference in the future to create a new assets consistent with the established look

After Project: client satisfaction/retention, internal review

- Correspondence with client- show gratitude and offer help on future projects that may arise
- Artist statement-overview of project process for inclusion in portfolio

Sources

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PLP Project Schedule

	Artifact	Deadline
1)	Agency-Phase 2-Memo	Week 1- Thursday, 3/3
2)	Agency- Phase 3- Correspondence- Supervisor	Week 1- Friday, 3/4
3)	Agency- Phase 3- Correspondence- Peer	Week 2- Wednesday, 3/9
4)	Agency- Phase 4- Correspondence- Supervisor	Week 2- Thursday, 3/10
5)	Agency- Phase 4- Correspondence- Peer	Week 2- Friday, 3/11
6)	Agency- Phase 5- Report	Week 3- Wednesday, 3/16
7)	Freelance- Phase 1- Correspondence- Client	Week 3- Friday, 3/18
8)	Freelance- Phase 1- Design Brief	Week 3- Friday, 3/18
9)	Freelance- Phase 2- Correspondence- Client	Week 4- Wednesday, 3/23
10)	Freelance- Phase 2- Proposal	Week 4- Friday, 3/25
11)	Freelance- Phase 3- Correspondence- Client	Week 5– Wednesday, 3/30
12)	Freelance- Phase 4- Correspondence- Client	Week 5– Thursday, 3/31
13)	Freelance- Phase 5- Correspondence- Client	Week 5- Friday, 4/1
14)	Freelance- Phase 5- Billing Materials	Week 6- Wednesday, 4/6
15)	Freelance- Phase 5- Style Guide	Week 6– Friday, 4/8
16)	Freelance- After Project- Correspondence- Client	Week 7- Wednesday, 4/13
17)	Freelance- Before Project- Advertisement	Week 7- Friday, 4/15
18)	Freelance- After Project- Artist Statement	Week 8- Wednesday, 4/20
19)	In-House- Phase 2- Proposal	Week 8- Friday, 4/22